

A

# REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

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Tuesday, October 18. 1709.

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I have told you my Sentiments about the Dearness of Corn; I have laid it down very plain, and I hope convincingly, that there is really NO SCARCITY in Britain at this time — I think, you will excuse me for being mov'd a little at the ridiculous Madness of the Times, who are joyning together DEARTH and PLENTY — I have also hinted at the grand Omissions of some of our Magistrates, in not exerting their Power for the Redress of this monstrous Irregularity — I shall therefore offer to them a Method, whereby to regulate this great Grievance, and humbly leave it to their mature Deliberation.

For your own Information, Right Worshipful and Worshipful, &c. I say, for your Information, and the publick Satisfaction; please only to make but a Search by the Constables and proper Officers thro' every Parish and Precinct, and inform yourselves, if there be any such Thing as a SCARCITY in this Nation — If you can find it, if you can see a Reason in the Want of Quantity for the raising the Price to this Degree; if you are not on the contrary convinc'd of the Abuse, and that we have Corn enough for both us and our Neighbours, let us know it, and I promise I shall make l' Amende honourable in the very next Paper to your full Satisfaction.

If you find Plenty—If you find GOD has better to us than we know of, as well as better to us than we deserve, let us be just to our Maker, as well as just to our selves, and acknowledge it— And would you really tell the World, what Stock of Corn you find in your several Parishes and Districts, would you return into one GENERAL, the Store that Providence has laid up for us; if I have any Guess at the Nations Stock of Corn, we need not have DEARTH and PLENTY thus haunting us continually.

And if you really find this Plenty, as I am very positive you must, it will then necessarily follow to enquire, what is the Reason of the Dearness of Price? I know the immediate Answer— And for this Reason it is that I write upon the Subject; Every Man's Mouth is full of the Grievance, and nothing else will be allow'd to be talk'd of. *O the Exportation!* They carry it all away to the Dutch—and the Dutch eat our Bread out of our Mouths— And this must pass for the Grievance so currently, that they will not so much as enquire into other Reasons— *I'll tell you a Story—* There's a Man falls off from a Scaffold into the River, and after a great Deal of Difficulty to recover him, he is taken up again, tho' as Dead— All the Neighbours come about him, and all possible Help is got to recover him, but in vain, the Man to all Appearance dy'd, and every Body said he was drowned— At last, upon a more skillful Person's Enquiry, it was found, the Man's Neck was dislocated, or as we say, his Neck was broke with the Fall, having struck against the Bottom— Upon an immediate and regular Extension, the Man recover'd, having not been long enough under Water to be strangled— And this Notion of his being drowned was really the most dangerous to him, for had it continu'd a little longer, the Man had been lost.

I think, the Tale will apply— You will have it be the Exportation and the carrying away your Corn is the Occasion of its Dearness—I tell you no—The Man is

not drowned— You will soon find the Distemper, if you will search for it, and recover all again— 'Tis not your exporting the Corn, 'tis not the Want of Corn at home; the Quaity of Corn now in this Kingdom is immense and incredible, you cannot export to hurt you—you have enough for the Dutch and your selves, and may keep open your Ports without Danger; 'tis all a Jest, a Fraud of our own upon our selves, in short we are stock-jobb'd out of our Corn—'tis a new fashion'd Trade, or indeed an old One reviv'd, of raising Prices upon meer Report— frightening us with Shadows, and Corn-jobbing the Nation, to trick them out of their Money.

It is allow'd, that there is a great Demand or Corn abroad, particularly in Holland and Portugal, not to say France; and the Harvest which in the North of Britain is not yet quite over, prevents the People threshing out great Quantities— This makes it be crav'd in the Markets—and every thing, that has more Buyers than Sellers, rises in Price— Thus far Nature— But then comes in Artifice to help out— The money'd Men foreseeing the great Demand abroad, buy up great Quantities, and lay it by for a Market; *These we call Engrossers:* Others go about to the Farmers Houses, and they contract perhaps for all the Corn they have in their Stacks or Barns; and fixing a Price, or leaving the Price to the Market-Rate, at the Time of Delivery, they bargain to take it away as fast as it can be gotten out; and *these we call Fore-stallers*, because they fore-stall the Market, and prevent its being brought to open Sale— Against both these we have standing Laws, and our Justices may easily find out Ways how to punish them. There are again rich Farmers and Landlords, who foreseeing a Scarcity of Corn, let it lie for a Price, and will not thresh out their Corn in Hopes of a dearer Time; and this we call With-holding, and in Time of great Scarcity, the Justices may force such to bring their Corn to Market.

Let these People now be dealt with according to Law, and we shall soon see the Price of Corn fall in spight of Exportation, and not-

notwithstanding all the great Demands of our Neighbours—

But O the great Rains! — It was a very notable Instance, how easily our wise People in *London* are impos'd upon; it rain'd excessively the Middle and latter End of *September* for ten or twelve Days, generally speaking — And upon this the Price of Corn rose most intollerably —

*Let us examine the Sense of it*; all the Harvest round *London* for 100 Miles every way was carry'd in, and the Danger from Rain all over — The Winter Seed-Time over, the Corn most in the Ground and out again — How could the Rain be a Reason for raising the Corn? — If it be alledg'd, that in the *North* the Harvest was not in — I grant it; but I am a Witness against ye all there — For being in the *North*, I can assure ye, that there they have had very little Rain, but have a very seasonable Harvest — What then can all this be? — It is all nothing but the Fraud and Cunning of the Buyers, who make Cockneys of the People in *London*, and make them believe, Rain at *Michaelmas* should make Corn dear — and run them up to what Price and upon what Pretence they please.

And indeed you Gentlemen of *London*, you have so infested the whole Grofs of our Commerce with the Plague of Stock-jobbing, that the Contagion is extended even to these most necessary Articles of Life — How long have the Hop-Traders been all Jobbers? And the whole Trade of Hops is now in a Manner carry'd on by the Bear-skin Method, Buying and Selling the Hops that never grew, and ballancing by paying the Difference — And how many Load of Hops are there bought and sold every Year at *Canterbury*, more than all the Hop-Grounds in *East Kent* can produce!

Coals is the next Article; and this is a new Step the jobbing Trade has taken, and the Lighter-men and Crimps are our Coal-jobbers; here they make use of all the Stock jobbing Villanies imaginable, and the Romelands at *Billingsgate* begins to shew her self one of *Exchange-Alley's* Basfards. Here sham Reports of the Coal Fleets having met with a Storm, or of great Numbers taken by the French; Then a Rumour

of Want of Coals in the *yne*; an Account of 100 Sail come in, when there's 300 Sail, and the rest kept back down the River to be hid, and a thousand such Subtilties and Frauds to raise or keep up the Price — Then when the Price falls, and the Ships appear, then buy up 30, 50, 60 Ships of Coals, and lay them by, till the Fleet is gone, and the Price rises.

And now we are come to Corn jobbing; and indeed this is the only Step to bring the Mob upon the Jobbers, for nothing movet the People of *England* to Tumults and Riots, like Popery, and the Price of Corn.

After all, if we are bewitch'd with these Syrens, charm'd with this Circle, and if Jobbing as for ever must be our Fate — No Nation in the World ought to pity us, and we ought to reproach our selves as the only Cause of our own Disasters — and never talk of Exportation of Corn; you must export it — you ought to export it, you can't spare enough to export, and it is infinitely our Advantage to export it.

There is indeed a Kind of Exportation of Corn, which ought to be examin'd into — and which I shall speak more to in my next.

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S I R

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